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CHAPTER III

TIME AND SPACE

I

121 In this chapter we look backwards on our description of Nuer interest in cattle and of their oecology and forwards to an account of their political structure. Their oecology limits and in other ways influences their social relations, but the value given to oecological relations is equally significant in understanding the social system, which is a system within the oecological system, partly dependent on it and partly existing in its own right. Ultimately most, perhaps all, concepts of time and space are determined by the physical ambient, but the values they embody are only one of many possible responses to it and depend also on structural principles, which belong to a different order of reality. In this book we are not describing Nuer cosmology but their political and other institutions, and are, therefore, interested mainly in the influence of oecological relations on these institutions rather than the influence of the social structure on the conceptualization of the oecological relations. Thus, to give one example, we do not describe how Nuer classify birds into various lineages on the pattern of their lineage structure. This chapter is therefore a bridge between the two parts of the book, but we cross it in one direction only.

●805 In describing Nuer concepts of time we may distinguish between those that are mainly reflections of their relations to environment, which we call oecological time, and those that are reflections of their relations to one another in the social structure, which we call structural time. Both refer to successions of events which are of sufficient interest to the community for them to be noted and related to each other conceptually. The larger periods of time are almost entirely structural, because the events they relate are changes in the relationship of social groups. Moreover, time-reckoning based on changes in nature and man's response to them is limited to an annual cycle and therefore cannot be used to differentiate longer periods than seasons. Both, also, have limited and fixed notations. Seasonal

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and lunar changes repeat themselves year after year, so that a Nuer standing at any point of time has conceptual knowledge of what lies before him and can predict and organize his life accordingly. A man's structural future is likewise already fixed and ordered into different periods, so that the total changes in status a boy will undergo in his ordained passage through the social system, if he lives long enough, can be foreseen. Structural time appears to an individual passing through the social system to be entirely progressive, but, as we shall see, in a sense this is an illusion. Oecological time appears to be, and is, cyclical.

The oecological cycle is a year. Its distinctive rhythm is the backwards and forwards movement from villages to camps, which is the Nuer's response to the climatic dichotomy of rains and drought. The year (*ruon*) has two main seasons, *tot* and *mai*. *Tot*, from about the middle of March to the middle of September, roughly corresponds to the rise in the curve of rainfall, though it does not cover the whole period of the rains. Rain may fall heavily at the end of September and in early October, and the country is still flooded in these months which belong, nevertheless, to the *mai* half of the year, for it commences at the decline of the rains—not at their cessation—and roughly covers the trough of the curve, from about the middle of September to the middle of March. The two seasons therefore only approximate to our division into rains and drought, and the Nuer classification aptly summarizes their way of looking at the movement of time, the direction of attention in marginal months being as significant as the actual climatic conditions. In the middle of September Nuer turn, as it were, towards the life of fishing and cattle camps and feel that village residence and horticulture lie behind them. They begin to speak of camps as though they were already in being, and long to be on the move. This restlessness is even more marked towards the end of the drought when, noting cloudy skies, people turn towards the life of villages and make preparations for striking camp. Marginal months may therefore be classed as *tot* or *mai*, since they belong to one set of activities but presage the other set, for the concept of seasons is derived from social activities rather than from the climatic changes which determine them, and a year is to Nuer

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a period of village residence (*cieng*) and a period of camp residence (*wec*).

I have already noted the significant physical changes associated with rains and drought, and some of these have been presented in charts on pp. 52 and 53. I have also described, in the last chapter, the oecological movement that follows these physical changes where it affects human life to any degree. Seasonal variations in social activities, on which Nuer concepts of time are primarily based, have also been indicated and, on the economic side, recorded at some length. The main features of these three planes of rhythm, physical, oecological, and social, are charted on the opposite page.

The movements of the heavenly bodies other than the sun and the moon, the direction and variation of winds, and the migration of some species of birds are observed by the Nuer, but they do not regulate their activities in relation to them nor use them as points of reference in seasonal time-reckoning. The characters by which seasons are most clearly defined are those which control the movements of the people: water, vegetation, movements of fish, &c.; it being the needs of the cattle and variations in food-supply which chiefly translate oecological rhythm into the social rhythm of the year, and the contrast between modes of life at the height of the rains and at the height of the drought which provides the conceptual poles in time-reckoning.

Besides these two main seasons of *tot* and *mai* Nuer recognize two subsidiary seasons included in them, being transitional periods between them. The four seasons are not sharp divisions but overlap. Just as we reckon summer and winter as the halves of our year and speak also of spring and autumn, so Nuer reckon *tot* and *mai* as halves of their year and speak also of the seaons of *rwil* and *jiom*. *Rwil* is the time of moving from camp to village and of clearing and planting, from about the middle of March to the middle of June, before the rains have reached their peak. It counts as part of the *tot* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *tot* proper, the period of full village life and horticulture, from about the middle of June to the middle of September. *Jiom*, meaning 'wind', is the period in which the persistent north wind begins to blow and people harvest, fish

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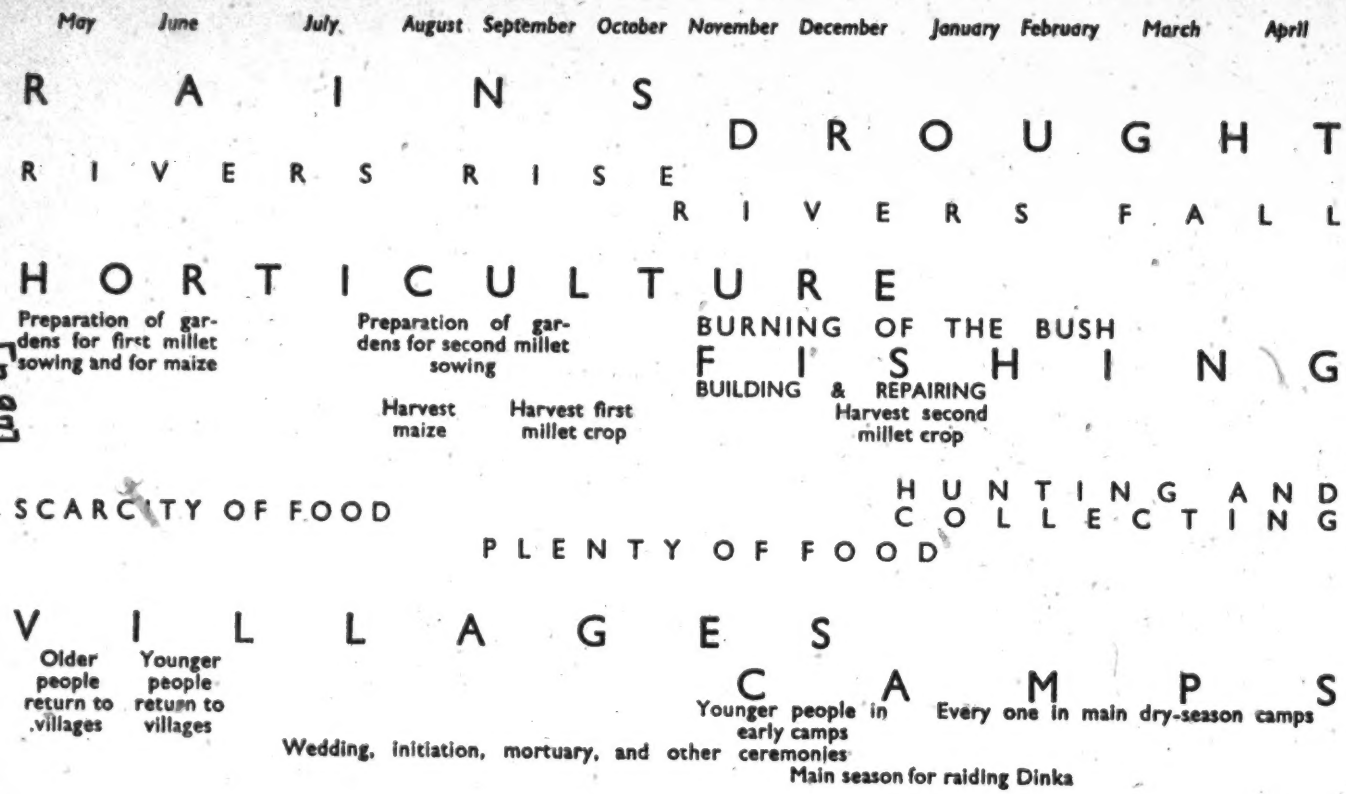

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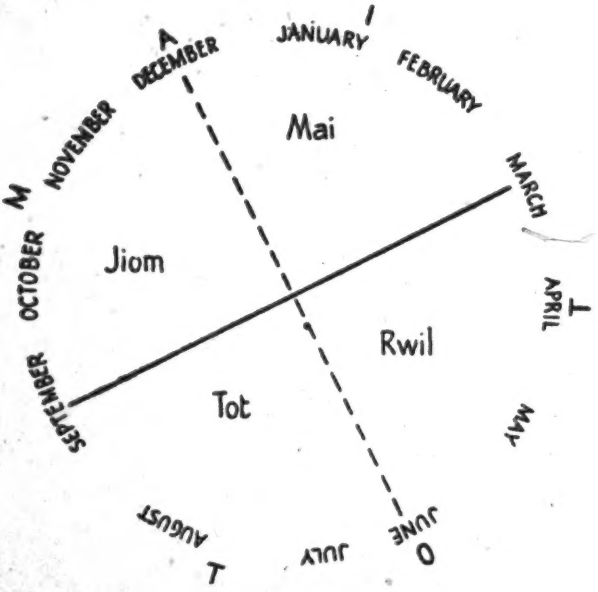
from dams, fire the bush, and form early camps, from about the middle of September to the middle of December. It counts as part of the *mai* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *mai* proper, from about the middle of December to the middle of March, when the main camps are formed. Roughly speaking, therefore, there are two major seasons of six months and four



minor seasons of three months, but these divisions must not be regarded too rigidly since they are not so much exact units of time as rather vague conceptualizations of changes in oecological relations and social activities which pass imperceptibly from one state to another.

In the diagram above a line drawn from mid March to mid September is the axis of the year, being an approximation to a cleavage between two opposed sets of oecological relations and social activities, though not entirely corresponding to it, as may be seen in the diagram below, where village life and camp life are shown in relation to the seasons of which they are the focal points. Nuer, especially the younger people, are still in camp for part of *tot* (the greater part of *rwil*) and are still in villages, especially the older people, for part of *mai* (the greater part of

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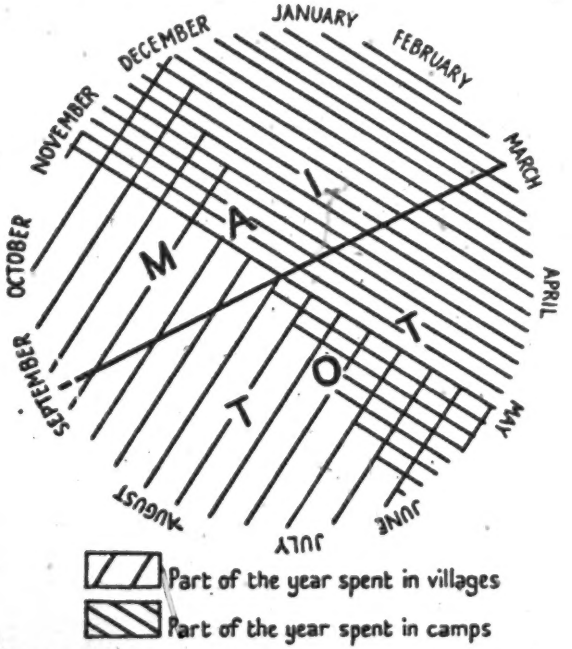
jiom), but every one is in villages during *tot* proper and in camps during *mai* proper. Since the words *tot* and *mai* are not pure units of time-reckoning but stand for the cluster of social activities characteristic of the height of the drought and of the height of the rains, one may hear a Nuer saying that he is going to *'tot'* or *'mai'* in a certain place.



The year has twelve months, six to each of the major seasons, and most adult Nuer can state them in order. In the list of months given below it has not been possible to equate each Nuer name with an English name, because our Roman months have nothing to do with the moon. It will be found, however, that a Nuer month is usually covered by the two English months equated to it in the list and generally tends to coincide with the first rather than the second.

teer	Sept.–Oct.	*duong*	Mar.–Apr.
lath (*boor*)	Oct.–Nov.	*gwaak*	Apr.–May
kur	Nov.–Dec.	*dwat*	May–June
tiop (*in*) *dit*	Dec.–Jan.	*kornyuot*	June–July
tiop (*in*) *tot*	Jan.–Feb.	*paiyatni* (*paiyene*)	July–Aug.
pet	Feb.–Mar.	*thoor*	Aug.–Sept.

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Nuer would soon be in difficulties over their lunar calendar if they consistently counted the succession of moons,[1] but there are certain activities associated with each month, the association sometimes being indicated by the name of the month. The calendar is a relation between a cycle of activities and a conceptual cycle and the two cannot fall apart, since the conceptual cycle is dependent on the cycle of activities from which it derives its meaning and function. Thus a twelve-month system does not incommode Nuer, for the calendar is anchored to the cycle of oecological changes. In the month of *kur* one makes the first fishing dams and forms the first cattle camps, and since one is doing these things it must be *kur* or thereabouts. Likewise in *dwat* one breaks camp and returns to the villages, and since people are on the move it must be *dwat* or thereabouts. Consequently the calendar remains fairly stable and in any section of Nuerland there is general agreement about the name of the current month.

In my experience Nuer do not to any great extent use the names of the months to indicate the time of an event, but generally refer instead to some outstanding activity in process at the time of its occurrence, e.g. at the time of early camps, at the time of weeding, at the time of harvesting, &c., and it is easily understandable that they do so, since time is to them a relation between activities. During the rains the stages in the growth of millet and the steps taken in its culture are often used as points of reference. Pastoral activities, being largely undifferentiated throughout the months and seasons, do not provide suitable points.

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There are no units of time between the month and day and night. People indicate the occurrence of an event more than a day or two ago by reference to some other event which took place at the same time or by counting the number of intervening 'sleeps' or, less commonly, 'suns'. There are terms for to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, &c., but there is no precision about them. When Nuer wish to define the occurrence of an event several days in advance, such as a dance or wedding, they do so by

[1] There is some evidence of an intercalary month among the Eastern Jikany, but I cannot be definite on this point, and I have not heard it mentioned in other parts of Nuerland.

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reference to the phases of the moon: new moon, its waxing, full moon, its waning, and the brightness of its second quarter. When they wish to be precise they state on which night of the waxing or waning an event will take place, reckoning fifteen nights to each and thirty to the month. They say that only cattle and the Anuak can see the moon in its invisible period. The only terms applied to the nightly succession of lunar phases are those that describe its appearance just before, and in, fullness.

The course of the sun determines many points of reference, and a common way of indicating the time of events is by pointing to that part of the heavens the sun will then have reached in its course. There are also a number of expressions, varying in the degree of their precision, which describe positions of the sun in the heavens, though, in my experience, the only ones commonly employed are those that refer to its more conspicuously differentiated movements: the first stroke of dawn, sunrise, noon, and sunset. It is, perhaps, significant that there are almost as many points of reference between 4 and 6 a.m. as there are for the rest of the day. This may be chiefly due to striking contrasts caused by changes in relations of earth to sun during these two hours, but it may be noted, also, that the points of reference between them are more used in directing activities, such as starting on journeys, rising from sleep, tethering cattle in kraals, gazelle hunting, &c., than points of reference during most of the rest of the day, especially in the slack time between 1 and 3 p.m. There are also a number of terms to describe the time of night. They are to a very limited extent determined by the course of the stars. Here again, there is a richer terminology for the transition period between day and night than during the rest of the night and the same reasons may be suggested to explain this fact. There are also expressions for distinguishing night from day, forenoon from afternoon, and that part of the day which is spent from that part which lies ahead.

Except for the commonest of the terms for divisions of the day they are little used in comparison with expressions which describe routine diurnal activities. The daily timepiece is the cattle clock, the round of pastoral tasks, and the time of day and the passage of time through a day are to a Nuer primarily

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the succession of these tasks and their relations to one another. The better demarcated points are taking of the cattle from byre to kraal, milking, driving of the adult herd to pasture, milking of the goats and sheep, driving of the flocks and calves to pasture, cleaning of byre and kraal, bringing home of the flocks and calves, the return of the adult herd, the evening milking, and the enclosure of the beasts in byres. Nuer generally use such points of activity, rather than concrete points in the movement of the sun across the heavens, to co-ordinate events. Thus a man says, 'I shall return at milking', 'I shall start off when the calves come home', and so forth.

Oecological time-reckoning is ultimately, of course, entirely determined by the movement of the heavenly bodies, but only some of its units and notations are directly based on these movements, e.g. month, day, night, and some parts of the day and night, and such points of reference are paid attention to and selected as points only because they are significant for social activities. It is the activities themselves, chiefly of an economic kind, which are basic to the system and furnish most of its units and notations, and the passage of time is perceived in the relation of activities to one another. Since activities are dependent on the movement of the heavenly bodies and since the movement of the heavenly bodies is significant only in relation to the activities one may often refer to either in indication of the time of an event. Thus one may say, 'In the *jiom* season' or 'At early camps', 'The month of *Dwat*' or 'The return to villages', 'When the sun is warming up' or 'At milking'. The movements of the heavenly bodies permit Nuer to select natural points that are significant in relation to activities. Hence in linguistic usage nights, or rather 'sleeps', are more clearly defined units of time than days, or 'suns', because they are undifferentiated units of social activity, and months, or rather 'moons', though they are clearly differentiated units of natural time, are little employed as points of reference because they are not clearly differentiated units of activity, whereas the day, the year, and its main seasons are complete occupational units.

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this quality of time among the Nuer. Time has not the same value throughout the year. Thus in dry season camps, although daily pastoral tasks

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follow one another in the same order as in the rains, they do not take place at the same time, are more a precise routine owing to the severity of seasonal conditions, especially with regard to water and pasturage, and require greater co-ordination and co-operative action. On the other hand, life in the dry season is generally uneventful, outside routine tasks, and oecological and social relations are more monotonous from month to month than in the rains when there are frequent feasts, dances, and ceremonies. When time is considered as relations between activities it will be understood that it has a different connotation in rains and drought. In the drought the daily time-reckoning is more uniform and precise while lunar reckoning receives less attention, as appears from the lesser use of names of months, less confidence in stating their order, and the common East African trait of two dry-season months with the same name (*tiop in dit* and *tiop in tot*), the order of which is often interchanged. The pace of time may vary accordingly, since perception of time is a function of systems of time-reckoning, but we can make no definite statement on this question.

Though I have spoken of time and units of time the Nuer have no expression equivalent to 'time' in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth. I do not think that they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time or of having to co-ordinate activities with an abstract passage of time, because their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves, which are generally of a leisurely character. Events follow a logical order, but they are not controlled by an abstract system, there being no autonomous points of reference to which activities have to conform with precision. Nuer are fortunate.

Also they have very limited means of reckoning the relative duration of periods of time intervening between events, since they have few, and not well-defined or systematized, units of time. Having no hours or other small units of time they cannot measure the periods which intervene between positions of the sun or daily activities. It is true that the year is divided into twelve lunar units, but Nuer do not reckon in them as fractions of a unit. They may be able to state in what month an event

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805 occurred, but it is with great difficulty that they reckon the relation between events in abstract numerical symbols. They think much more easily in terms of activities and of successions of activities and in terms of social structure and of structural differences than in pure units of time.

We may conclude that the Nuer system of time-reckoning within the annual cycle and parts of the cycle is a series of conceptualizations of natural changes, and that the selection of points of reference is determined by the significance which these natural changes have for human activities.

II

In a sense all time is structural since it is a conceptualization of collateral, co-ordinated, or co-operative activities: the movements of a group. Otherwise time concepts of this kind could not exist, for they must have a like meaning for every one within a group. Milking-time and meal-times are approximately the same for all people who normally come into contact with one another, and the movement from villages to camps has approximately the same connotation everywhere in Nuerland, though it may have a special connotation for a particular group of persons. There is, however, a point at which we can say that time concepts cease to be determined by oecological factors and become more determined by structural interrelations, being no longer a reflection of man's dependence on nature, but a reflection of the interaction of social groups.

The year is the largest unit of oecological time. Nuer have words for the year before last, last year, this year, next year, and the year after next. Events which took place in the last few years are then the points of reference in time-reckoning, and these are different according to the group of persons who make use of them: joint family, village, tribal section, tribe, &c. One of the commonest ways of stating the year of an event is to mention where the people of the village made their dry season camps, or to refer to some evil that befell their cattle. A joint family may reckon time in the birth of calves of their herds. Weddings and other ceremonies, fights, and raids, may likewise give points of time, though in the absence of numerical dating no one can say without lengthy calculations how many years ago an event

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805 took place. Moreover, since time is to Nuer an order of events of outstanding significance to a group, each group has its own points of reference and time is consequently relative to structural space, locally considered. This is obvious when we examine the names given to years by different tribes, or sometimes by adjacent tribes, for these are floods, pestilences, famines, wars, &c., experienced by the tribe. In course of time the names of years are forgotten and all events beyond the limits of this crude historical reckoning fade into the dim vista of long long ago. Historical time, in this sense of a sequence of outstanding events of significance to a tribe, goes back much farther than the historical time of smaller groups, but fifty years is probably its limit, and the farther back from the present day the sparser and vaguer become its points of reference.

805 561 However, Nuer have another way of stating roughly when events took place; not in numbers of years, but by reference to the age-set system. Distance between events ceases to be reckoned in time concepts as we understand them and is reckoned in terms of structural distance, being the relation between groups of persons. It is therefore entirely relative to the social structure. Thus a Nuer may say that an event took place after the *Thut* age-set was born or in the initiation period of the *Boiloc* age-set, but no one can say how many years ago it happened. Time is here reckoned in sets. If a man of the *Dangunga* set tells one that an event occurred in the initiation period of the *Thut* set he is saying that it happened three sets before his set, or six sets ago. The age-set system is discussed in Chapter VI. Here it need only be said that we cannot accurately translate a reckoning in sets into a reckoning in years, but that we can roughly estimate a ten-year interval between the commencement of successive sets. There are six sets in existence, the names of the sets are not cyclic, and the order of extinct sets, all but the last, are soon forgotten, so that an age-set reckoning has seven units covering a period of rather under a century.

805 601 613 The structural system of time-reckoning is partly the selection of points of reference of significance to local groups which give these groups a common and distinctive history; partly the distance between specific sets in the age-set system; and partly

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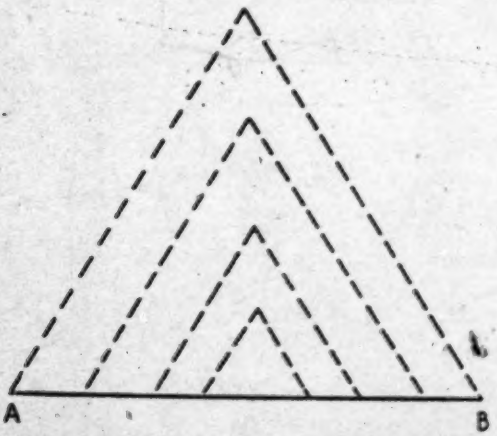
distances of a kinship and lineage order. Four generation-steps (*kath*) in the kinship system are linguistically differentiated relations, grandfather, father, son, and grandson, and within a small kinship group these relationships give a time-depth to members of the group and points of reference in a line of ascent by which their relationships are determined and explained. Any kinship relationship must have a point of reference on a line of ascent, namely a common ancestor, so that such a relationship always has a time connotation couched in structural



terms. Beyond the range of the kinship system in this narrow sense the connotation is expressed in terms of the lineage system. As this subject is treated in Chapter V, we limit further discussion of it to an explanatory comment on the diagram above. The base line of the triangle represents a given group of agnates and the dotted lines represent their ghostly agnatic forebears, running from this base to a point in lineage structure, the common ancestor of every member of the group. The farther we extend the range of the group (the longer becomes the base line) the farther back in lineage structure is the common ancestor (the farther from the base line is the apex of the triangle). The four triangles are thus the time depths of four extensions of agnatic relationship on an existential plane and represent minimal, minor, major, and maximal lineages of a clan. Lineage time is thus the structural distance between groups of persons on the line *AB*. Structural time therefore

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cannot be understood until structural distance is known, since it is a reflection of it, and we must, therefore, ask the reader to forgive a certain obscurity at this point and to reserve criticism till we have had an opportunity of explaining more clearly what is meant by structural distance.

We have restricted our discussion to Nuer systems of time-reckoning and have not considered the way in which an individual perceives time. The subject bristles with difficulties. Thus an individual may reckon the passage of time by reference to the physical appearance and status of other individuals and to changes in his own life-history, but such a method of reckoning time has no wide collective validity. We confess, however, that our observations on the matter have been slight and that a fuller analysis is beyond our powers. We have merely indicated those aspects of the problem which are directly related to the description of modes of livelihood which has gone before and to the description of political institutions which follows.

We have remarked that the movement of structural time is, in a sense, an illusion, for the structure remains fairly constant and the perception of time is no more than the movement of persons, often as groups, through the structure. Thus age-sets succeed one another for ever, but there are never more than six in existence and the relative positions occupied by these six sets at any time are fixed structural points through which actual sets of persons pass in endless succession. Similarly, for reasons which we explain later, the Nuer system of lineages may be considered a fixed system, there being a constant number of steps between living persons and the founder of their clan and the lineages having a constant position relative to one another. However many generations succeed one another the depth and range of lineages does not increase unless there has been structural change. These statements are discussed more fully on pp. 198–200.

Beyond the limits of historical time we enter a plane of tradition in which a certain element of historical fact may be supposed to be incorporated in a complex of myth. Here the points of reference are the structural ones we have indicated. At one end this plane merges into history; at the other end into myth. Time perspective is here not a true impression of actual distances like that created by our dating technique, but a

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reflection of relations between lineages, so that the traditional events recorded have to be placed at the points where the lineages concerned in them converge in their lines of ascent. The events have therefore a position in structure, but no exact position in historical time as we understand it. Beyond tradition lies the horizon of pure myth which is always seen in the same time perspective. One mythological event did not precede another, for myths explain customs of general social significance rather than the interrelations of particular segments and are, therefore, not structurally stratified. Explanations of any qualities of nature or of culture are drawn from this intellectual ambient which imposes limits on the Nuer world and makes it self-contained and entirely intelligible to Nuer in the relation of its parts. The world, peoples, and cultures all existed together from the same remote past.

It will have been noted that the Nuer time dimension is shallow. Valid history ends a century ago, and tradition, generously measured, takes us back only ten to twelve generations in lineage structure, and if we are right in supposing that lineage structure never grows, it follows that the distance between the beginning of the world and the present day remains unalterable. Time is thus not a continuum, but is a constant structural relationship between two points, the first and last persons in a line of agnatic descent. How shallow is Nuer time may be judged from the fact that the tree under which mankind came into being was still standing in Western Nuerland a few years ago!

Beyond the annual cycle time-reckoning is a conceptualization of the social structure, and the points of reference are a projection into the past of actual relations between groups of persons. It is less a means of co-ordinating events than of co-ordinating relationships, and is therefore mainly a looking-backwards, since relationships must be explained in terms of the past.

III

We have concluded that structural time is a reflection of structural distance. In the following sections we define further what we mean by structural distance, and make a formal,

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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221 Hunger is partly responsible for the low pulse of life at this season. As has been explained, Nuer cultivate little and in most districts, especially in Lou country, they have to husband their grain if it is not to be exhausted long before the new harvest has ripened. They leave most of the grain in their wet season villages for seed and to support themselves during the hungry weeks that last from sowing to harvest time. They do not carry much millet to the camps so that they have to use it sparingly, though, if the camps are only a day or two away from the villages, women will sometimes return to get further supplies from the village granaries. When the dry season is well advanced the cows often cannot obtain sufficient pasturage of a nourishing quality and give little milk. Those Nuer who camp at the edge of inland pools and lagoons can supplement their diet with fish, but on the Sobat we only had what few fish boys could spear in the shallows and the yield of harpooning from our single canoe. From time to time members of our camp managed to kill wild beasts: gazelle, cob, tiang and giraffe. Otherwise our meat supply was limited to an occasional ox or cow which died and to blood from the necks of cows.

•805 233 Camp life is regulated by requirements of the cattle and Nuer speak of periods of the day by reference to pastoral tasks rather than to the course of the sun, *e.g.*, they say that they will do something at the time of milking, or after the cattle are driven to pasture, or when the calves return to camp. The camp time-table varies little from day to day. It is approximately as follows:—

512 234

A.M.

6.00 Everybody rises.
6.45 The cows are milked.
8.00 The cattle are driven to pasture, the kraal is cleaned and the morning meal is served.
8.15 Goats and sheep are milked and taken to pasture.

P.M.

4.30 Calves, sheep and goats are brought back to camp.
5.00 Cows which have recently calved come running home.
5.30 The herd returns and the cows are milked.
7.30 The evening meal is served.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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538 The Nuer language has a wealth of animal and bird stories, tales of the origin of the tribe and folk-lore. Also games, songs, riddles, and superstitions. All of these are as yet practically untouched by the pen. A sort of cannibal-ogre combination, capable of changing into an animal, is usually a prominent character in their folk-lore.

192 The language contains no word for 'thank you' as far as I have delved into it, but one does not need to be in Nuerland long to discover that the Nuer has a word for 'I am mistaken', and is willing to use it.

TIME, SEASONS, MOON, AND STARS.

● [805] 821 The Nuer gauges time by moons, the light or dark of the moon. He knows the stars, and has names for many of the constellations. He is a keen observer of them and makes his own observations concerning them. Orion's belt is called 'gat rum juk'. One star is supposed to be a man leading a horse, the second star is supposed to be the horse, while the third star is another man driving the horse as he follows him.

The evening star is called 'Lipai chiing', as it is considered to be like a girl in the village waiting for the moon to come up and when it does come up, she goes away with it. Hence the name, which means 'wait in the village for the moon'.

The Southern Cross, the Little Dipper and other constellations are also noted and named.

825 805 The Nuer firmly believes, as already noted, that the cattle see the new moon the night before it is visible to the human eye. I have frequently asked them concerning this. The date upon which the cattle see the new moon always seems to be the date specified upon the calendar as the date when the new moon should be visible. Yet the Nuer has no calendar.

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The year is divided into months according to the moon. 805

There are four seasons. The fishing season usually starts in the latter part of December or the first of January. It lasts probably three months, then when the rainy season starts and the river rises, the spring season begins. The spring season is called 'rwil' while the fishing season is called 'mei', or as we would pronounce it 'mae'. The season in which the dura is growing is called 'tot' (pronounced 'tawt') and corresponds to our summer season. The autumn season is called the season of winds or 'jom'.

There is no Government thermometer at Nasser, and I can give no definite scale of temperature. I have had a thermometer in my sitting-room for several years—(a room with brick walls and grass roof, two large windows and two doors). The minimum temperature which I have happened to note was 56 degrees F. The maximum in this room was 105 degrees F. As a rule the temperature ranged from 84–100 degrees F. Of course different temperatures may be registered when the thermometer is placed elsewhere. I just give the temperature of the room where I was working during the hottest part of the day. Others have found their thermometers to register 110 degrees. 132

However the sun does a thorough job in heating the bath water. The pipes are on the surface of the ground and the water is often far too hot to use until after it has stood for a while, as there is no cold water to cool it with.

The day is also divided, so while the Nuer cannot tell what time it is by giving the hour, they can give a very definite idea of what they mean. 805

au e durdur	not yet daybreak.
ci au bak	daybreak.
ci caŋ kany	sunrise.
thal caŋ	about ten o'clock.

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caŋdar	noon.
buoka caŋ	middle of afternoon.
ke thiaŋ	late afternoon.
ci war lip	early evening.
war	night.
wardar	midnight.

('ci' is pronounced 'chi', 'caŋ,' is pronounced 'chang', 'thiaŋ', is pronounced 'thiang'.)

NAMES OF NUER—DETERMINING DATES

[527] A Nuer has a splendid memory, but dates, birthdays, and anniversaries are not the things he stores away in it.

A parent may tell you in what season of the year a child was born, but after a few years the number of its years becomes but a confused memory.

When some special event has transpired which fixes a date firmly in their minds, they may date an event from that time. The time when the English patrol was in the Garjak country is often used when dates are discussed; an event may be dated either so long before or after the 'boats of the air' came. A flood, a famine, a year when wild animals were numerous, all may be used to mark time.

805 561 When the age of a child is asked it may be determined from the reply to such questions as:

does he crawl?	one year.
is he weaned?	(if so) three years old.
does he herd sheep?	8–12 years old.

805 551 561 For later ages one may ask 'when will he have the tribal marks cut?' (tribal marks are usually cut when the boy is from 14–16 years old). After the tribal marks are cut, age may be determined by the class name, providing the sequence of classes is known (see Chapter IV.)

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A woman may be asked 'If you were a man, what class would you be in?' and her age determined by the answer. [805] 551

A child is often named to commemorate some event that has just occurred so the name in itself gives an idea of the date: for instance 'Rath' is famine. Possibly the boy was born in a famine year. If the family are in mourning when the child is born, it may be called 'Mun' if a boy or 'Nyamwon', if a girl. The name means 'ground' or 'daughter of the ground'. 561

An orphan—whose mother is dead, although the father may still be living—is often called 'Ret' which means 'orphan'. 'Bany Piny' is also a name given to an orphan which means 'left on the ground'. A girl orphan is often called 'Nyaret'. 551

Twins are often given names which mean 'the leader' and 'the one who was left', indicating their order of birth. The feminine prefix is used if a girl.

Buth	the leader (a boy).
Nyadwoth	the one who was left (a girl).

A child always takes the personal name of its father as its surname, although in so doing the possessive form of the father's name is often used, but not always.

Mun Dup	name of father.
Rath	personal name of son.
Rath Mwon	full name of son.
Pec Kak	name of father.
Nyalira	personal name of daughter.
Nyalira Pec	full name of daughter.

A girl's name almost always has the prefix 'nya-' or 'nyan-' meaning 'daughter of'.

A girl retains her father's personal name as her surname throughout life as she does not assume her husband's name when she marries.